

Dear Chairs and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Laurel LaPorte-Grimes. I am with USIC (Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community – Manchester), a member of the HUSKY 4 Immigrants Campaign. USIC works with CT Mutual Aid East of the River, advocating for and with our immigrant community members, as well as other historically and currently marginalized communities here in Manchester and the surrounding area.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding HB 6659: An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2025, with respect to the budgets of the human services agencies, specifically for the Department of Social Services, which administers HUSKY (Medicaid and CHIP).

We understand that the Governor's Budget funds many important priorities for the human services needs of Connecticut's residents. However, this budget does not invest enough in the health care needs of our community. In particular, this budget does not appropriate funds to cover expanding HUSKY up to age 26 for those who are income-eligible, regardless of immigration status.

Even though health care is a human right, many of our community members are currently unable to access medically necessary procedures. Connecticut has made good progress over the past two years in covering children up through the age of 12, regardless of immigration status, and we are grateful that many of the children in our community are now enrolled in HUSKY. However, many of our community members remain unable to access healthcare, including undocumented immigrants who are over the age of 12 (with the exception of pregnant people) and low-income adult immigrants with legal resident status for less than 5 years. In order for our families and communities to thrive, it is important that we continue our progress and take that next step to provide HUSKY for children and adults up to age 26.

In addition to the importance of providing access to healthcare from a moral and ethical perspective, it benefits our state from a cost perspective to do so. The HUSKY 4 Immigrants coalition has estimated that expanding HUSKY to include young people up to the age of 26 would cost roughly \$18.4 million and cover about 5,000 young people who are currently living without access to health insurance. Currently, when these young people need healthcare, they must rely on Emergency Rooms to treat conditions that could have been more effectively dealt with by a primary care doctor. We all pay for this through the emergency Medicaid program, to the tune of approximately \$15 million in 2021. More insured people also means that hospitals would save in reduced uncompensated care costs, making them more viable and able to continue to offer care for us all. Including funds in the budget to expand HUSKY to cover all immigrants up to the age 26 is in line with the age bracket of the Affordable Care Act and will result in a healthier and more financially sound community as a whole.

It's also important to highlight that expanding HUSKY to undocumented persons is not a controversial move among voters. In Connecticut, expanding HUSKY to all undocumented immigrants is supported by 57% of voters (84% of Democrats, 83% of Black voters, and 76% of Latinx voters). In our state, we care about people and families, we recognize the importance of access to healthcare for all, regardless of immigration status, and we encourage our leaders to devote resources to efforts that reflect these values.

When we have lost our ability to care for one another, we have lost our ability to be human. Appropriating funds to expand HUSKY to all immigrants up to the age of 26 is in line with both our moral and ethical obligations and our practical fiscal concerns. We ask that you please act in the best interests of a healthy and thriving community, and include funds to expand HUSKY to cover all immigrants, regardless of immigration status, up to the age of 26.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD
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Organizer, CT Mutual Aid East of the River
Manchester, CT